

MARCH 15, 1953



# THE NATIONAL Voter

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE U. S.

1026 17TH STREET, N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

## TWO BIRDS WITH EITHER STONE

TWO pieces of legislation which may soon be before the Congress might, if adopted, contribute to increasing imports and also to economy in government. One would repeal the so-called Buy American Act and the other would simplify our customs procedures.

### The Buy American Act

The original purpose of the Buy American Act, passed in 1933, was to stimulate employment in this country by requiring government agencies to purchase supplies from domestic rather than foreign sources. The Act permitted purchase of foreign supplies only when American supplies were unavailable or when the foreign price was more than 25 percent lower. Legislation on public housing, the merchant marine, rural electrification, stockpiling strategic materials, and appropriations for the Defense Department contain similar provisions. State and municipal statutes also have Buy American clauses.

The Buy American Act has come into the limelight along with the movement to reduce foreign aid and increase trade. European manufacturers realized they could often supply goods to the U. S. government, but that Buy American provisions made it useless to submit bids for government contracts. European governments point out that these provisions are inconsistent with our policy of encouraging Europe to stand on her own feet.

Although the heads of government agencies are allowed some discretion in applying the Buy American Act, most of them "play it safe" by awarding contracts to domestic producers. However, in exceptional cases an agency has withheld local pressure and has purchased equipment from a foreign firm at a considerable saving to the American taxpayer. The Interior Department awarded a contract for electrical power equipment to be installed in an Alaskan plant to a Swiss firm. The difference between the Swiss bid and the nearest domestic bid, taking freight and the tariff into account was \$245,681. The Army found it could save \$80,000 by buying 1300 microscopes from Italy. As a result of the competition from abroad, the domestic firms lowered their price and the government split the contract between Italian and American firms.

Early in this session of Congress, Representative Smith, (D., Miss.) introduced a bill to repeal the Buy

American Act. No action has been taken and much will depend on the general attitude of Congress on the question of whether U. S. imports should be increased by every available means.

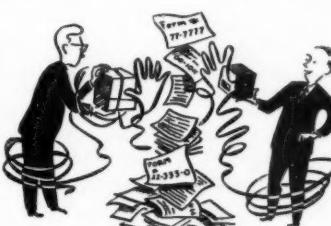
### Customs Simplification

All merchandise produced in a foreign country and shipped to the U. S. for sale goes through a U. S. customhouse where officials determine what duty should be paid. The red tape surrounding customs has created such a log-jam of cases that a great many people concerned with the problem, including President Eisenhower, are urging Congress to pass a bill to simplify customs procedures.

In December 1952, U. S. customhouses had 723,077 entries of foreign goods on which duties had not been determined. The Customs Courts received 30,000 cases in fiscal 1952 mainly instituted by importers who claimed that imported goods were appraised at too high a value. By December 1952 only 7,335 cases had been decided. Some of the cases won't be decided for four or five years. Such delays inevitably discourage people who are trying to import. Importers often find that long after the goods have been sold, the appraiser has assessed a duty so much higher than the importer thought he would have to pay, that all profits derived from the sale are wiped out.

There are five different methods by which the value of imported merchandise is determined. If an importer estimates the value lower than the customs official, the importer pays a penalty or appeals to the Customs Court and the Court may not decide the case for years. On the other hand, if the importer values the goods higher than the customs official, he does not get a refund. To make the situation even more harassing for the importer, customs officials are located in different cities and appraise the value of like products differently. Last year there were some 6,496 cases where the determination of value differed. By the time the Customs Bureau in Washington determines the correct value, another delay has occurred.

A Customs Simplification bill intended to untangle some of the problems surrounding the importation of goods passed the House in 1951 but the Senate took no action. It is quite certain a similar bill will be introduced into the 83rd Congress.



# Let's Look at the Record



**Ballot Sitters—Dearborn, Mich.**

**T**HE League of Women Voters of the U. S. has just won the American Heritage award for ". . . most effective nationwide register and vote program conducted by a national civic organization", and a number of local Leagues are receiving special awards. The concrete record on which these awards are based is evident in the Voters' Service Reports which are now being tabulated. They contain an impressive story of community service, plus a degree of imagination that could well be applied to all our problems. How often have you heard or said—

#### **Can't seem to interest young people . . .**

*Pine Bluff, Arkansas* held a free swimming-and-watermelon party for 21-year-olds to distribute voting information.

#### **Nothing to do during the summer . . .**

*St. Louis, Missouri* sent over 2,000 "political address cards" to members and contributors during July.

#### **Don't reach women outside the League . . .**

*Great Falls, Montana* sponsored "operation coffee cup" which started with neighborhood morning parties at which each hostess invited four guests who brought four others.

#### **Too hard to reach workers in an industrialized area . . .**

*East Hartford, Connecticut* shifted from one factory cafeteria to another, demonstrating to over 15,000 working men and women the voting machines being used for the first time.

*Camden, New Jersey* interviewed the public relations departments of 30 leading industries to encourage company register-and-vote campaigns. Response included billboards, special sound system announcements, pay envelope enclosures, purchase of non-partisan material for employees, radio programs, posters and bulletin board announcements.

#### **Don't have member participation . . .**

*Oregon* climaxed three years of study and research on reapportionment with a state-wide campaign. They got 35,000 signatures on a petition, made 108 speeches, worked with 68 state newspaper editors, distributed 20,000 flyers, and on November 4 won by 150,000 votes.

*LaCrosse, Wisconsin* compared the city directory and the City Clerk's list to find unregistered voters. They sent letters and followed up with telephone calls and personal visits from over 600 high school seniors. 4,523 citizens registered to set a new record of 26,120.

#### **Can't get adequate distribution . . .**

*Yellow Springs, Ohio* has a permanent block by block distribution system. Originally intended for Voters Service, the system saved their local project by helping to alert the community for action at a crucial moment.

#### **Flyers are old stuff . . .**

*Madison, Wisconsin* posted signs in the taverns reading "If you are old enough to be in here, you are old enough to vote! Vote November 4."

#### **Can't arouse interest in issues . . .**

*North Carolina* sponsored a TV and radio show, "Republican or Democratic—what will victory mean to North Carolina?"—a discussion of party platforms specifically applied to North Carolina problems.

*Atlanta, Georgia* devoted two months to explaining the 46 Constitutional amendments on the ballot after they found it took 26 minutes just to read the ballot!

#### **Don't know how to use TV . . .**

*Minneapolis, Minnesota* sponsored a daily 15-minute show "Know Your Candidate." Every candidate for state or county office was invited to answer questions from prominent citizens or League members—78 candidates accepted!

*Providence, Rhode Island* did a half-hour TV show to demonstrate the voting machine after a League questionnaire indicated 62 percent of the people did not understand how to work the machines. Party representatives showed how to vote a straight ticket, independents how to split a vote.

#### **Can't use ordinary techniques in a big city . . .**

*Tulsa, Oklahoma* publicized the numbers of four special telephones installed in their office and answered over 1200 calls for information on the two days before the election.

*Spokane, Washington* secured a 35-foot brand new aluminum trailer truck to serve as a mobile voting unit—plus a driver to move the truck each morning! Stores ran special power lines out to the street to run the two voting machines inside the truck. About 3,500 citizens visited the votemobile and crowds outside waited an average of 45 minutes to get in.



**VOTEMOBILE—Spokane, Washington**

#### **Citizens are apathetic . . .**

*Huntsville, Alabama*, a relatively new League, sent 75 members into the polling places to serve as watchers. As a result of their report, published in full in the newspaper, the grand jury has returned 15 indictments for election law violations, the first ever presented in this county. Through home demonstration clubs, study clubs and citizen groups, they have worked for a year to remove the names of 10,000 dead and nonresidents from the voting lists. They held election law forums for election officials, one of whom commented, "I have been holding elections for years but this will be the first time I have ever really known for sure what to do!" Where the League first faced suspicion and opposition, they now have the outspoken support of the city officials and the community.

Voters Service in 1952 has built a record on which we can all stand with pride!

## MISS KATHARINE LUDINGTON

October 16, 1869-March 7, 1953

It was a perfectly beautiful day. The sun was brilliant and warm despite a cold March wind. The deep blue sky seemed to sparkle. The towering elms showed signs of new life, and an indefinable quality in the light and air promised spring. The big white house overflowed with friends and family. There was her chair beside the table, piled high with books and periodicals just as it had been as long as I could remember. There we had talked so many, many times, and she had given so generously of her inestimable experience and knowledge and wisdom and humor.

The white spire of the church sent its beautiful shaft up into the cloudless blue. There, a little later, before the great banks of spring flowers, we all gathered to do her honor. The League of Women Voters of Connecticut helped to fill the church to overflowing, because she was to us a symbol of all the things we aspired to be and do. Those of us of all ages who were privileged to know and love her have been given a new sense of dedication and a truly priceless heritage. Her spirit will go on.

*Percy Maxim Lee.*

## EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER ON THE BRICKER AMENDMENT

*From Ann Arbor, Michigan*

"... These proposals (of Senator Bricker and others) have an immediate appeal because of their avowed intent of protecting our constitutional liberties. On closer examination, however, it can be seen that they strike at the stability of our whole network of treaty ties with other countries, and that the danger that they seek to avert is unreal ... Under the proposals Congress could in effect exercise a "veto" on the operation of a treaty in this country by its failure to enact implementing legislation ... This would mean that no nation in dealing with the U. S. could have full confidence that a legally-binding treaty would ever be put into effect in this country. At best, there would follow a period of delay, and at worst a willful disregard of obligations already duly contracted. The example of the U. S. in the present world is a powerful one. If every other nation felt free to set up its own law in opposition to its international obligations, international law would indeed become 'but a shadow of a name.' ... In spite of the legal complexities of the subject and the constitutional issues involved, the problem is essentially a political one. The proposed amendments spring from the strange supposition that the President with the consent of a two-thirds majority of the Senate would deprive the U. S. of rights essential to its national existence. The question before us is whether we are to rewrite our Constitution because we do not trust our President and Senators to guard the national interest when they judge the merits of any given treaty. The proposed amendments are superfluous, are opposed to our national tradition, and manifest a sense of internal insecurity which is not worthy of the U. S. or worthy of its position of leadership in the free world."

## Omnibus Appropriations Bill

ONE of the budgetary reforms which is likely to be considered during this session of Congress is the Single Appropriations Bill. The proposal is embodied in S. Con. Res. 8, sponsored by Senator Harry Byrd (D.Va.), who has introduced a similar bill each session since 1947. The bill's 47 sponsors, constituting almost one-half of the Senate membership, include 35 Republicans and 10 Democrats.

The three principal provisions of the bill are:

1. Consolidation of appropriations in one package, instead of a dozen or so bills as at present.
2. Specific limitations on amounts to be obligated annually for expenditure from all appropriations —those previously enacted but unspent as well as those currently under consideration.
3. Appropriations committee report to list annual expenditure estimates which could be compared with revenue estimates from the Treasury.

Many point to the 1950 experimental omnibus appropriations bill as a failure. However, Mr. Byrd does not think this experiment is applicable. In his words, "the committees merely collected all of the regular appropriations between two covers of a bill, and that was as far as its similarity to this proposal went." However, the most technical parts of Senator Byrd's proposal, the provision for a ceiling on annual obligations and the listings in the committee reports of estimated expenditures and receipts, have never been tried by Congress.

Under present practices Congress acts on appropriations without exercising control over balances carried over from old appropriations,—the so-called "unexpended balances." Supporters of this bill feel that Congress will never be able to control the purse strings effectively until some provision is made for control of annual obligations. They also maintain that the listing of comparable expenditures and receipts would make it possible for an individual Congressman to consider the effect of an appropriation on the federal deficit before casting his vote.

There is little disagreement on the need for more coordination and clarification of Congress' job in reviewing the budget. However, there are some who feel that the "obligation" and "expenditure" provisions of this bill would be difficult to implement. There are others who feel that it is not really the kind of control which Congress can efficiently exercise over the budget.

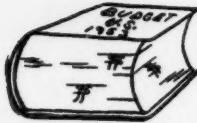
An understanding of these terms is essential to an understanding of the Byrd Bill.

**Appropriations**—the authority granted by Congress to incur new obligations.

**Obligations**—purchases and orders placed, contracts awarded, salaries and wages earned, and any similar transactions which require the payment of money.

**Expenditures**—Payments made by the issuance of checks or payments of cash.

**Unexpended balances**—the amounts which have been appropriated by Congress but have not yet been obligated or expended by a governmental agency.



## Congressmen View Item II

THE League of Women Voters, in Convention assembled, decided last April that the budgetary procedures of the Congress needed some attention. Lately a good many League members have been asking Congressmen for their views on the subject.

Here are some verbatim, albeit anonymous, excerpts from the legislators' replies:

*"I very definitely believe that there is a staggering amount of detail involved in evaluating appropriations—certainly far too much for an individual member of Congress to think of coping with successfully. The answer to the problem, in my judgment, is to furnish the Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate with a large staff of experts, qualified by training and experience, to go through all budget requests with a fine-tooth comb and prepare completely reliable recommendations for the members of the Appropriations Committees. This staff would be on the job 365 days a year. Their knowledge of governmental operations would have to be so thorough as to qualify them to be able authoritatively to challenge every single Administration request."*

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Due to the complex and detailed nature of the federal budget, specialized knowledge is a prerequisite for effective control and evaluation. Consideration of revenue and appropriation bills by a single committee would prove a cumbersome and unwieldy procedure. However, spending and taxation are obviously two sides of the same coin, and a much greater degree of coordination is necessary. This was contemplated under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 which provided for the adoption of a legislative budget fixing a ceiling on the maximum amount to be appropriated for expenditure in the ensuing fiscal year. In brief, this section of the Act directed the four taxing and spending committees of Congress, acting jointly, to meet at the beginning of each regular session to examine the President's estimates of prospective federal receipts and expenditures and to prepare a legislative budget for the next fiscal year. It was intended that this legislative budget*

would include estimates of total federal receipts and expenditures, and that the Joint Committee, set up under the Act, would recommend the maximum amount to be appropriated. These provisions of the Legislative Reorganization Act have not, unfortunately, been made effective. A further attempt along these lines was made during the past session of the Congress when the Senate passed S. 913, a bill which received my strong endorsement."

\* \* \* \* \*

*"The difficulty that Congressmen have with the budget is this: The justification for the items are made by Departments of the Executive Branch of the Government, who have a direct personal interest in what their agency gets. Long hearings are held by the Budget Bureau which is the President's fiscal arm, to determine what to recommend to Congress for his departments, but the Congressmen, or representatives of the Committees were not present to hear what these justifications were. The result is that they are so complicated that it is almost utterly impossible for the members of Congress in the appropriate Committees, to get the necessary information to determine whether the justifications are made in accordance with the need of the particular branch of the Government. This is a complicated matter, but many of us have been thinking that we must find some way to place in the possession of Members of Congress more facts to determine whether the requests are justified by the need. For instance, I have been thinking that every committee should be permitted to send a member or some other designated person to the appropriate Budget group to listen to the justifications that are made."*

\* \* \* \* \*

*"On July 1, 1952, we will have unexpended balances from previous appropriations of approximately \$75 billion, and, if President Truman submits his new budget, and it is enacted at an estimated \$80 billion, there will be available for expenditure on and after July 1, 1952, more than \$150 billion, and, with respect to the unexpended balances, the Congress loses a large measure of its control."*

### ★ CONGRESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT ★

**Treaties (S. J. Res. 1):** A subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee continues to hold hearings on this proposed constitutional amendment to limit the treaty-making powers. A subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee, headed by Sen. Taft (R., Ohio), has also been charged with examining the proposed amendment. This subcommittee plans to hold hearings later in the session.

**Standby Controls (S. 753 and S. 1081):** Senate Banking and Currency Committee is holding hearings on these bills to provide standby economic controls and to authorize the President to issue a 90-day freeze order on prices, wages and rents in an emergency. Section 104 of S. 753 continues the provisions of the Defense Production Act, setting up quotas on fats, oils and dairy products.

**Dairy Imports:** The need for import controls on dairy products will be the first phase of the national dairy situation studied by the special Dairy Investigating subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee, headed by August H. Andresen (R., Minn.). Hearings begin March 17.

**D. C. Home Rule (S. 999)\*:** No hearings have been scheduled so far on this bill to provide an elected Council

of 9 members, a mayor appointed by the President, an elected School Board of 9 members and a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives for the District of Columbia.

**Reinstatement of Legislative Budget (S. Res. 36):** Introduced by Sen. Dirksen (R., Ill.), this resolution proposes that Congress carry out the provisions of Section 138 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 relating to the legislative budget. Referred to Appropriations Committee.

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